



TRANSFORMING USM: 2004-09
"Regional Excellence, National Recognition"

The University of Southern Maine must continue on its journey to becoming a nationally recognized, regional comprehensive university. It is a journey fueled by the aspirations of our students, the needs of our state, and the immense talent of our faculty and staff.

USM has made great strides in its quality, program offerings, research, and public service. But we face new and emerging conditions that call for an acceleration of our development. We must now work with greater focus to transform USM into the mature university our region needs.

THE CHALLENGE:

Even as the traditional role of this university endures, and inspires, what must change is the nature and speed of our response to emerging economic and demographic trends. We all know them well: dramatic increases in costs, particularly healthcare; increasing competition; decreasing or, at best, flat state support; the specter of ongoing deficits; the emergence and rapid growth of the Community College System; far fewer high school graduates in the years ahead; and the clear possibility of a reorganized University of Maine System. One could go on at great length discussing likely elements of the System plan. The bottom line, however, is that the System plan presents us with the broader opportunity of serving the cultural and social needs of Maine's most populous region. Bringing **The USM Plan** to life under these changed conditions is the purpose of our current effort, **Transforming USM**.

We will either fall victim to the trends noted above, or we can initiate key actions which will transform this university in such a way that we enhance the academic and intellectual quality of a USM education, and ensure our long-term viability. To date we have endured, despite already weathering deep base budget cuts of at least \$2.5 million in the past three years. We have done it with creativity and courage. But there is a strong potential for continuing shortfalls ([Attachment II](#)). This university thanks you for your accomplishments under difficult circumstances. But this underscores the fact that we must move **The USM Plan** along with more speed, and focus our energy and resources on a limited number of core activities that will serve as levers of change to make it possible to accomplish our goals and reduce costs.

Based on conversations with many of you, deliberations with the President's Staff, and hundreds of pieces of feedback, we have identified five levers of change, all of which are pragmatic, purposeful, and powerful. For the next three to five years, these must be the primary focus of our work.

THE CHARGE:

For most of the past 10 years, our focus has been on making USM a major force in the growth and improvement of the economic, social, and cultural fabric of Maine. Four years ago this October, the USM Board of Visitors, with the input of more than 200 community leaders, released [The Southern Maine Imperative](#). In that report, our advocates clearly and forcefully articulated that this university "must become one of the top-ranked public, regional comprehensive universities in the United States in the quality, breadth, and the accessibility of its academic programs."

We responded to that challenge by introducing **The USM Plan: Achieving National Recognition for Regional Excellence**. **The USM Plan**, a long-term, developmental roadmap, identifies four broad goals which will empower us to achieve regional excellence:

- Actively embrace a community of intellectual inquiry and learning;
- Deepen the organizational culture in support of inquiry and learning;
- Build a responsive, coherent curriculum; and
- Mobilize resources leading to a clear alignment of budgets with plans and priorities.

The USM Plan is the vision for what USM should stand for; it established our fundamental long-term direction. **Transforming USM** identifies the important work to be done for the next three to five years to accomplish these goals. At the heart of all our work continues to be the desire to develop a first-rate university grounded in the liberal arts, offering a wide range of programs taught by a faculty deeply involved in the scholarship of their disciplines.

THE CHANGES:

Five Essential Levers of Change

1. Revitalize Curriculum.
2. Invest in Current Programs and People.
3. Change Enrollment Profile.
4. Upgrade and Expand Facilities
5. Raise Additional External Support.

Each of these must be driven by a commitment to do well those things we choose to do, to forego some opportunities, and be willing to realign resources in support of priorities. A clear, sharp, and persistent focus on these key actions is essential given our limited resources.

Successful achievement of these actions will result in higher quality; more effective curricular and co-curricular programs; a more diverse student body; a physical plant worthy of a nationally recognized university; a more enjoyable and effective working and learning environment; and more efficient support services.

1. REVITALIZE CURRICULUM

Our essential work is providing high-quality educational opportunities for students throughout Maine's most populous and fastest-growing region. We can strengthen USM's academic reputation and impact by adding, downsizing, or suspending selected programs, based on student and regional needs. As student interests and regional needs shift, we must reallocate resources in such a way that we strengthen key areas and selectively add new programs. Any new programs will be evaluated on four criteria, which we have used for a number of years:

- *Is there a clear and sustainable demand for the program?*
- *Can we offer the program at a level of quality that meets national standards?*
- *Will the program generate enough resources to meet new costs?*
- *Does the program have academic value consistent with the mission of the university?*

Programs that have severely reduced enrollments or cannot sustain their quality will lose resources or be suspended. These steps are essential if we are to prosper as a university.

Actions:

- Complete the revisions of general education linked to first-year experience and to the needs of transfer students.
- Establish three to five new degree programs, drawing primarily on existing courses.
- Establish up to three new learning communities to enhance learning experiences.

- Complete the development of an organized co-curriculum.
- Establish a College of Interdisciplinary Studies for curricular experimentation and development, drawing on faculty from existing programs.
- Broaden our current Honors Program to become an Honors College, and establish discipline-based honors programs.
- Review programs established in the last seven years to determine if enrollment and credit-hour targets have been met.
- Establish an office of e-learning to facilitate growth of alternative pedagogies and outreach.
- Generate and distribute comprehensive annual enrollment/retention/graduation reports to support program review and resource allocations.

2. INVEST IN CURRENT PROGRAMS AND PEOPLE

Inflation and reductions have stretched our budgets too thin and have eroded our organizational capacity. We have to look carefully at our organizational structure to be sure it is as cost-effective as possible. As we move forward, we need to make investments to strengthen what we currently are doing.

It is important to note that we have already started; the following areas are funded for 2004-05 using new money:

- \$200,000 for promotion and post-tenure review salary increases.
- \$201,000 for financial aid.
- \$190,000 for maintenance and operation of newly finished upper library floors.
- \$215,000 for library acquisitions and digital library.
- \$180,000 for PeopleSoft and business software.

Actions:

- Reduce annual costs by an average of \$525,000 per year, each year, to cover projected deficits.
- Make targeted, annual investments totaling \$776,700.
 - Fund faculty promotion and post-tenure review (\$200K).
 - Fund library acquisitions (\$50K additional).
 - PeopleSoft/ERP (\$100K, net of work process re-engineering).
 - 1 percent reallocation to operating budgets, distributed at discretion of vice presidents (\$170,500 for 2005-06).
 - Financial aid and recruiting (\$256,200).
- Create Reinvestment Fund.
- Restructure budget processes to simplify and clarify budgeting while reducing ongoing structural deficits.
- Implement incentive-based budgets where appropriate.
- Implement the University Review and Improvement Committee's (URIC) recommendations.
- Become a greener, more sustainable organization utilizing the plan prepared by the Environmental & Economic Sustainability Committee.
- Implement key reorganizations for greater overall effectiveness to include:
 - Establish an Information Technology Division, led by a Chief Information Officer (CIO).
 - Move the Division of Community & Professional Education to Academic Affairs.
 - Initiate planning for a College of Visual and Performing Arts.
- Implement Employer-of-Choice strategies that attract and support a diverse workforce and create an environment in which people view their work as meaningful and receive recognition for their contributions.
 - Conduct biennial employee satisfaction surveys.

- Aggressively pursue a market-based compensation system.
- Implement the Diversity Plan.
- Host an annual USM Café to discuss common issues and build community.
- Implement performance management system university-wide.
- Develop and fund a comprehensive faculty development program to recruit and sustain a diverse faculty.
- Utilize a broad view of scholarship that honors traditional research and publication, while recognizing the full scope of academic work.

3. CHANGE ENROLLMENT PROFILE

To counter declining high school graduation rates, we need to change the composition of our student body and find the means to maintain a fall enrollment of 11,000 headcount while increasing FTE. We intend that our student body will be more culturally diverse, and will include more transfers, full-time undergraduates, and graduate students. The primary effort will focus on the retention of undergraduates. Our current retention rates at the freshmen-to-sophomore level, although improving, lag behind those of our peer institutions.

Our specific goals are to increase first-to-second year retention from 68 to 75 percent, and to increase the six-year graduation rate from 33 to 50 percent. Equally challenging will be to increase graduate enrollment to 25 percent of our student population by 2008-09.

Actions:

- Initiate a joint undergraduate/graduate recruitment plan written to fulfill changing enrollment goals.
- Designate a Central Advising Council, with representatives from all schools and colleges that will be responsible for overseeing all first-year advising, and developing a retention plan.
- Place greater emphasis on recruitment, advising, and retention contributions by faculty in their evaluation processes.
- Work directly with high schools to clarify academic expectations, support early college/college-ready initiatives, align USM admission and placement standards with Learning Results.
- Contact all new students in the first six weeks of the semester to build retention.
- Launch a training program designed to support positive interpersonal interactions.

4. UPGRADE AND EXPAND FACILITIES

We need to renovate classrooms and complete planned buildings. Over the past few years, we have worked hard to add new buildings to increase our physical capacity to better serve students and the community. We have been remarkably successful at utilizing federal funds, state bond funds, and private dollars to finance the construction of many of these projects. Despite this success and the best efforts of our facilities staff, we have fallen behind in maintaining modern, comfortable classrooms and offices. This must be addressed, even as we tackle the following essential projects:

Actions:

- Complete currently approved and funded projects.
- Complete a long-range facilities master plan for each of the three campuses.
- Complete University Commons in Portland (Muskie, OLLI, expanded OML, new Glickman entrance) using private funds.
- Submit a \$90 million bond request to the Chancellor to implement facility plans, beginning with the renovation of Bailey Hall.
- Make classroom repair and renovation a priority in all planning.
- Build a new residence facility in Gorham (Fall 2006), and new residence facility and a University Center in Portland (open Fall 2007).
- Fund adequate maintenance and operating costs for all new and renovated spaces.

5. RAISE ADDITIONAL EXTERNAL SUPPORT

We are facing limited increases in state funding. At the same time, for student access and opportunity, we need to control tuition and fee increases. Consequently, we must develop other additional sources of revenue. Private fund raising, alumni donations, increased support for research, and direct federal awards for targeted projects (“earmarks”) will play an increasingly significant role in our future. The largest capital campaign in our history will be a major lever of change for transforming USM.

Actions:

- Conduct a \$25 million capital campaign over five years for facilities, endowments, program support, and scholarships.
- Continue to increase grant and contract awards by 10 percent per year (\$48.4 million total this year).
- Increase federal earmarks to an average of \$5 million annually.
- Seek \$90 million in state bonds over five years.

CONCLUSION:

As we implement these actions we will draw primarily on existing planning and governance units in order to keep the process simple and effective. This is not about creating new planning structures; it is about getting important work done ([Attachment I](#)).

Thank you for all of the contributions you make on a daily basis. Given the amount of change we are undergoing and are planning, there will be some chaos and ambiguity. The System-level reorganization and planning will add to the uncertainty and take three to five years to implement, presenting us with a challenge and an opportunity. We value not only your willingness to embrace these changes, but your commitment to help drive them. We will be more decisive than we have been in the past. The trends discussed in this plan demand it. We will continue to make every effort to share news and developments with you as information becomes available.

These challenges are not unique to USM. Universities across the nation are facing them; those which respond forcefully and creatively will prosper. We all recognize that change is inevitable. But, making that change become progress is entirely up to us. We will continue to make progress on our journey to becoming nationally recognized as one of America’s best public, regional universities.

It is a transformation worthy of our time, our creativity, and our commitment.